

Devotional Studies No. 19

Proclamation of Salvation and Its Appropriation

One stands in awe of Christ's love as one reflects upon Christ's demonstration of His love in the sacrificing of His body for the sins of humanity. This free forgiveness of sins is made available through faith and not works or performance of five ritualistic acts performed on Sunday morning, commonly called five acts of worship. One witnesses the wisdom of God in making salvation available to anyone who is willing to respond in faith, which response completes Reconciliation. God's mercy is revealed and offered in and through Christ.

One appropriates God's offer of salvation through faith in Jesus as God's Way of salvation. When one puts his or her faith, or trust, in Christ, one is incorporated into God's new community of believers, which community represents Christ's body upon earth. Following one's faith in Christ for redemption, one submits himself or herself to baptism as a sign or seal of that which has already taken place inwardly. Baptism is also one of the means whereby one acknowledges that God's way of salvation is right. One's baptism testifies to one's acceptance of God's Way of salvation in and through Christ. There is some sense in which baptism places a seal upon the fact that the person baptized belongs to Christ.

As one thinks about faith in Jesus, one is conscious that faith comes through the proclamation of the message about Christ's atonement upon Calvary. Paul addresses the means whereby one comes to faith in Jesus: "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (**Romans 10:17**). Preaching Christ crucified is the means whereby individuals learn of God's way of salvation. Preaching may seem foolish to men and women, but not so with God. Paul calls attention to God's methodology of reaching the lost: "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe" (**1 Corinthians 1:21**). It is not foolish preaching, but, as far as the world is concerned, the preaching of a crucified savior is foolishness. Yet, it is this message, in spite of the world's view, God "God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe"—Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

It is imperative that Christians share the message of salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ upon the Cross. Again, Paul focuses upon the importance of preaching: "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit" (**Ephesians 1:13**). Once more, Paul zeros in on the

importance of preaching: “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them (**Romans 10:14**)? The message of the Gospel stirs up faith. This message is about Christ as the Savior of the world. The Gospel is a “Divine Source” unto salvation. Listen again to the words of Paul as he goes right to the very heart of salvation:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last,^a just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” (**Romans 1:16-17**)

As Paul proclaimed the One who had been crucified, He had to give an outline of His life in order to describe Him as one “born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons” (**Galatians 4:4**). For Paul, Salvation on God’s part was wholly of grace, but, on the part of men and women, it is wholly by faith. In other words, faith is the channel through which one receives God’s righteousness. Paul expresses it this way: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast” (**Ephesians 2:8-9**). Faith is the human condition of securing salvation. God’s righteousness is received through faith in the finished work of Christ upon the Cross (see **Romans 3:21-22**).

Even though one is justified by faith, one must never forget that “faith without works is dead.” Paul also captures the kind of ethical behavior that follows one’s acceptance of Christ: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (**Galatians 5:6**). One’s acceptance of Christ as Lord demands growth in knowledge and holiness, that is to say, in spiritual apprehension of God’s scheme of redemption and in ethical achievement. Faith is the ground on which justification is conferred upon men and women and, at the same time, the faculty that receives it.

^aOr *is from faith to faith*